

The C-RSP Project: Characteristics of Reputationally Strong Programs

Background

The purpose of the *Characteristics of Reputationally Strong Programs (C-RSP) Project* is to identify common characteristics of well-respected, “reputationally strong” programs and to use these findings to benefit the field of HIV prevention. These programs gained their reputations because of such features as innovativeness, organizational commitment, experience with a target population, and use of clearly defined interventions. However, since these programs have not been evaluated by research trials using control or comparison groups and are seldom published, most HIV providers are not likely to know about them.

Identifying the Programs

In 1997, the C-RSP Project sought nominations from public and private AIDS organizations throughout the United States, using the following selection criteria:

- Located in the United States
- Locally based
- Currently in operation
- Possess a reputation for showing promise for HIV prevention
- Have not undergone formal outcome evaluation

Program selection emphasized diverse target populations, interventions, and geographic locations. Selected programs participated in a 2-day site visit conducted by staff from the CDC. Interviews with staff and clients, reviews of program background documents, and observation of activities were used to develop detailed profiles of the programs. In 1999, C-RSP focused on programs serving African Americans, building on the President’s Initiative on Race.

Common Characteristics

Information collected to date indicates that reputationally strong programs share these characteristics:

- Clearly defined target audiences, goals, and interventions
- Program flexibility at the administrative level
- Sufficient program resources and internal agency support
- Intervention components based in behavioral/social science theory
- Comprehensive, multi-modal strategies for delivering prevention messages
- Audience-centered approaches that are relevant, appropriate, and culturally competent
- Program staff who are committed to their work and who treat all clients with respect

Lessons Learned

Programs viewed as reputationally strong had many common characteristics associated with organizational mission, leadership, and program delivery. Program managers may want to consider these characteristics when engaging in strategic planning and/or enhancing existing programs. Researchers may want to focus future studies on how these characteristics shape interventions.

For more information about the C-RSP Project

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